Mississippi Democrat.

THREE DOLLARS] "THAT GOVERNMENT IS BEST WHICH GOVERNS LEAST." [IN ADVANCE.

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Miscellany.

DR. LARDNER'S LECTURES.

THE COMETS.

Dr. Lardner introduced his subject with a few remarks on the character of the planets, with the view of subsequent comparison with the motion of comets. He adverted to the circular orbit of the planets, and the fact that that orbit was upon an invariable plane, from which there was no deviation, and thus they maintained a uniform position with regard to the sun. The comets also revolve round the sun, said the lecturer, and this revolution is attributable entirely to the power of the sun's attraction. In this respect, they agree with the planets, and thus establish the fact that they belong to the solar system. But in every other respect they differ. In the first place, they do not revolve in circles; their path is oblong, or what is familiarly called an oval, and the position of the sun, instead of being in the centre, its relative position to the orbit of the planets, is at one end of the oval path of the comets. Thus we have the evidence that the comet is at various times at very different distances from the sun, being sometimes more remote than any planet in our system, and at others in the immediate vicinity of the sun; indeed there have been instances in which the comet has come into actual contact with the sun —grazed the surface of the sun, so to speak, as was in fact the case with the comet of March, 1843—last year. The planets we have seen move in the same undeviating plane, which may be indicated by the motion of the hands of a watch. Such is not the case with the comets.—They move in every conceivable angle with the plane of the ecliptic; some moving directly perpendicular with it, others at an angle of 45°, and indeed at every possible angle of the scale; it has also been demonstrated that there are exactly an equal number moving at one angle that there are at another; thus the same number move at an angle of 40° that have an angle of 45°, and so on. Their motion is also irregular in another important particular: they have by no means the uniform direct or forward motion of the planets; some move forward and some have a backward—or as it is scientifically called —a retrogade motion, and Arrago has determined that the number of those which move backwards is precisely equal to those which move forwards. In short, these bodies exhibit the most sovereign contempt for all the known laws of motion, or rather in their motion obscure the letter of the law, but hold in utter contempt the spirit of it. With another allusion to Arrago, Dr. Lardner paid a high tribute to his talents, assiduity, and the eminently successful and gratifying result of his labors. Arrago, said the lecturer, has instituted an ingenious investigation with regard to the number of comets. He asks the question, how many are probably attached to our system? If we imagine a space described by the orbit of Mercury, which is the planet nearest to the sun, and another distinct therefrom lying between the orbit of Mercury and the orbit of Herschel, the remotest planet of our system, we shall find upon the measurement of each space, that the proportion of that included within the orbit of Mercury, bears a proportion to the space without that orbit and within the orbit of Herschel, including of course the whole intermediate space occupied by all the other planets, as 1 to 125,000. Now the comets range throughout the system pretty uniformly, being distributed apparently equally in every part; and for every single comet therefore which has its perihelion in Mercury, that is the extremity of its orbit farthest from the sun, we have the direct inference that there are 125,000 in the space without the orbit of Mercury, or that space occupied by the rest of the solar system. There has been actually observed by Arrago within the orbit of Mercury as many as thirty comets which have their perihelion therein; and thus we have the conclusion that there are moving in our system, certainly, 3,750,000 of these bodies. But he does not stop here. We know that it is very difficult to observe all the comets within the Mercury's orbit, from its proximity to the sun, and it is therefore highly improbable that more than half the number have been seen. There are, doubtless, says Arongo, at least sixty; and thus we conclude that there are no less than 7,500,000 comets in our solar system. Indeed, the planets of the system are beyond doubt flitting through a swarm of 7,500,000 comets.

Now, with such facts as these developed to our consideration, we are naturally anxious to learn something of the character of these bodies, and what are the chances of the interruption of our system by them. Such questions are rational and appropriate. We find, first, that the great majority of comets are bodies destitute of solidity: in fact, they are composed of an exceeding thin, attenuated vapor, so thin, that we are enabled to see the smallest telescopic stars through the very body of the comet. Sir John Herschel, said the lecturer, assured me, some time since, in England, that he had seen, through the very centre of a comet, a cluster of stars of the sixteenth magnitude, the smallest known to the telescopic observation, and so minute that the smallest mist, the thinest haze in our atmosphere, would conceal them from our view. Yet they have been seen through a globutar mass, composing the body of a comet, 30,000 miles in thickness or diameter. Thus this mass of vapor must be far more attenuated than air itself; more attenuated than any vacuum which we can produce by the most perfect air-pump we can construct; and we are able to produce a vaccum in which no respiratory creature can live, nor the flame of a candle burn for a single moment. And this vacuum would, in such a state, be even massive compared with the vapor of which the comet is composed. But this is not to be unhesitatingly assumed of all the comets. Some astronomers believe that all are not mere æriform matter, and that it is probable that there are some which are composed of solid matter. This opinion is based chiefly upon the belief that the great degree of brightness which emanates from them is superior to what could possibly emanate from a body composed merely of unsubstantial or æriform matter. The probability is from this fact that there are a few which possess a certain degree of solidity.

Another and very remarkable quality of the comet, and which indeed constitutes in many cases its chief character, is the peculiar appendage familiarly known as the tail. This is, indeed, by many supposed to be an inseparable adjunct of comets; but it is so far from being so that we find a great number of comets have no tail at all, and indeed it is an appendage which is observable only when the comet comes into the more immediate region of the sun. The question then presents itself, what are the tail of comets, and what is the cause of them, and this is a question, I frankly admit, much more easily asked than answered. All we know of them is that they are composed of luminous matter, so exceedingly thin and transparent that we distinctly see the smallest stars through the very midst of them. But their most remarkable character is their enormous and almost incredible magnitude. The most learned and astute astronomers have instituted enquiry in vain. There have been made two suggestions, mere suggestions, professing to explain the causes, both of which are, however, liable to fatal objections. The first of these assumes that the tail is nothing more than an attenuated fluid, exuded or driven out of the body of the comet by the heat of the sun's rays. This conjecture is based upon the observation that the tail is generally turned from the sun. There are however comets with two tails, and comets whose tails are turned in every conceivable direction relatively with the sun; such an explanation of the cause is therefore altogether inadmissable; it is also liable to another objection, even were the other not utterly fatal. The influence of heat or fire is to evaporate, but not to drive the evaporated particles away—not to repel them. The other explanation or conjecture, like the first, supposes the tail to be composed of vapor, driven out of the body of the comet by the heat of the sun, and being lighter than the body of the comet, did not travel so fast, or rather as the comet rushes through space, the vapor is left behind, following more slowly than the comet itself. But there is an objection to this proposition altogether fatal, inasmuch as it rests mainly on the supposition that the tails of comets behave themselves as tails generally do, and invariably carry themselves behind, while in fact they are sometimes seen to change their directions in a few hours. We must then be content to remain at present in ignorance of the character of these bodies.

Another most remarkable character peculiar to comets is their exceeding lightness, it having been demonstrated that in no instance do they ever exert any attraction. A comet was observed in the 17th century to enter the immediate orbit of Jupiter, but without in the slightest degree affecting the motion of the planet; the only effect observed was upon the comet, which was thrown from its orbit, and at its next periodical return, was seen in a new orbit. In 1779, however, it again encountered the planet and rushed into the midst of his moons; in fact it must have touched the moons of Jupiter, but evidently with no injurious effect. Of the supposed influences of comets, the world invariable hears an infinite deal of sage speculation. No comet ever appears conspicuous in the heavens but some peculiar influence is ascribed to it; thus if it occurs at the time of great floods, the comet is responsible for it; if at a season of unusual drought, the comet is the cause; if in a winter of excessive cold, who is to blame but the comet? and should it appear at a time when we are melting with heat, still the comet is the hapless cause. So whether it is wet or dry, hot or cold, the unoffending comet which happened to manifest itself at the time, is held unconditionally responsible for it. Yet is there nothing in reason or the laws of nature to justify such an inference. But there is another mode in which the question can be examined. Arrago has enjoyed access to tables of meteorological observation in Europe, from which he has been enabled to ascertain that the variations of the weather have in no case apparently influenced by comets; that in fact weather has prevailed, as cold and as hot, as wet and as dry, at seasons which have been unmarked by the appearance of a comet, as those in which the most brilliant of these bodies have blazed through our system within view of the inhabitants of the earth. But the influence of the comet has not been limited to the weather, in the opinions of that portion of mankind who have speculated on the subject. Scarcely any manifestation of disease of a virulent or epidemic character in any part of the globe, has occurred, but it has been readily attributed to any unfortunate comet that chanced to be within the range of vision. Indeed some 14 or 15 years ago a physician of London of some eminence, named Foster, published a treatise, in which he labored, and certainly with considerable ingenuity, to prove that all the diseases which the inhabitants of our planet were heir to, had each and severally emanated from its own particular comet. This was not so difficult a task as it might at first appear, for Arrago has shown by observation that upon an average, two new comets are discovered every year. Therefore, if a disease happened to make its appearance in January, it was only necessary to find a comet within a few months either before or after that period, to find a cause for the disease; so that in fact this ingenious gentleman was sometimes most perplexed to find a disease for the comet. At the time of the great plague in London, a comet was discovered as the immediate cause, but we have no explanation of the remarkable fact that while this malignant body visited that city with its wrath, it left the village of Hammersmith, in the suburbs, entirely unscathed. One year he searched annals of human misery to find a disease for a particularly brilliant comet in vain; but after a long search, he ascertained that during that year a particularly fatal epidemic had prevailed among the cats of Westphalia, and of course this comet was at once set down as exclusively hostile to Westphalian cats.

It has been mentioned by an eminent philosopher, Wiston, that the Deluge was caused by a comet. His theory was as follows: [A diagram was here exhibited to illustrate the subject.] He supposed the earth to have been, prior to the deluge, covered with a solid crust beneath which there existed an ocean of subterranean water; and that the close proxiority of a comet raised a tide not only in the waters on the exterior of the earth, but also in the subterranean ocean. He contends that rain could not have fallen in sufficient quantities to have produced a deluge, but with the aqueous matter of the tail of the comet, and the waters under the earth breaking through, it was sufficient to submerge the whole land. In support of this theory Wiston quotes scripture, and says we have the proof in the words that "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up." He then asserts that a precipitation of the aqueous matter of the tail of the comet took place, and the work of the deluge was complete. He further supports his theory with the scriptures, and quotes the words relative to the receding of the waters as applicable thereto.—"The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained."

We have but to refute this theory with the fact that a comet could not remain long enough in the vicinity of the earth to produce a tide at all, and this is not a mere theory but a matter of conclusive demonstration.

We have now an interesting question presented to us. If such a swarm of comets are moving in our system, may not one of them by possibility strike the earth? It may. What then are the chances? La Place has calculated these chances, and in his calculation has assumed the greatest conceivable number. By his calculation he estimates the chances at 281,000,000 to 1. In other words, when the next comet makes its appearance, you may safely bet against the contingency of its striking the earth, or it would be an equal bet of $281,000,000 to $1.

A discovery has recently been made of the most interesting character, viewed in its moral and religious influences. Observations have been made with regard to two of the comets Eucke's and Beiler's peculiarly suited to the purpose, which have thrown a new light upon the nature of that space which lies beyond the atmosphere of our planet. Until these discoveries, it had been generally supposed that this space was a perfect vacuum.—Now the comets we have are, compared with the fluid called ether, infinitely volatile and light, and have thus proved in the existence of a medium while the planets have not betrayed it. Now we know that if a cannon ball and a piece of swansdown were allowed to fall from the dome of this house into the pit, the cannon ball would rush to the ground with resistless velocity, while the swansdown would fall with a very uncertain motion and occupy a considerable time in reaching the ground. But mark the difference—if we could produce a perfect and absolue vacuum, one would fall with precisely the same rapidity of the other, and a degree of force acquired only from the abstract effect of the law of gravitation. Now what the cannon ball is to the swansdown, the planet is to the comet.

The motion of the comet has proved conclusively and beyond all doubt, the existence of a resisting medium in the fields of space. This resistance is exceedingly small in its application to the planets, but distinctly perceptible in its effect on the comets; we know, however, now beyond controversy, that this medium must effect the planets, and retarding their motion to a certain extent must be constantly and gradually urging them, pressing them inward in their orbit nearer to the sun.—Thus we find that the common stamp of dissolution is upon all created things, and that it is a final result from which even systems, themselves have no exemption.—This is a fact that the earth, with all the planets revolving with it around the sun, have a common destiny; they must all in the process of time rush into the sun. The term of human life and of the existence of our system, have each their prescribed limits; the only difference is that the close of the one is more remote than that of the other. I give this only as an astronomical fact, but an undeniable one. It is not my province to enlarge upon its moral and religious influence; I leave that to its more appropriate association with the duties and labors of the sacred desk, and the exercises of the divine ambassadors of God upon earth.

"The philosophical argument, excited elsewhere, by Professor Bush, touching the change which the human body undergoes every seven years, was turned to a good account the other day by an Irishman, who was endeavoring to prove to a 'Native American' that the postulate o, his doctrine was altogether erroneous "Look,' said he, 'see now, it is a well known philosophical fact, that we have a new body every seven years, I came here nine years ago, an Irishman; but I've got a new body now, made on the soil, man, and I am as good a Native American as yourself!" The argument was a clincher. Appropos of this; our contemporary of the Commercial Advertiser, daily journal, lamented the other day, the fervid interest taken in the vexed questions of politics by the juveniles of the metropolis. A friend has just mentioned to us a striking illustration of this too prevalent spirit.—What were you doing out so late last night said an Irish mechanic to his son, one morning during the excitements. 'I was a walkin' in the Whig procession,' replied the lad. 'Well, I'll walk into you if I catch you doin' such a thing again,—now mind I tell you!' Scarcely a week afterwards he committed the same offence again.—The father was as good as his word, and 'basted' the lad soundly. The son did not keep the fact to himself, but told it to his companions, adding: 'It is bad enough to be whipped any way, but to be whipped by a d—d foreigner is outrageous!' The boy had the advantage of his father, in having been born in this country!"

[Knickerbocker.

Political.

IMMEDIATE ANNEXATION.

No one can deny that the question, whether Texas should be annexed to the Union, was fully and fairly before the country in the last contest. It came to be so from the progress of civilization on the one hand, and of Santa Anna's despotism on the other. The whig press, from the first, charged the democracy with fathering it. The democracy, in the convention that nominated its Presidential candidates, accepted the issue, and passed a resolution in favor of the measure. The candidates in nomination stood pledged to carry it out. No movement of importance was made against it, either in the conventions of the democratic party or in primary meetings. On the contrary, in these, as in the Baltimore convention, the party pleaded guilty to the charge, and acknowledged that annexation was one of its measures. Notwithstanding the fierce denunciation of the Texas plot—the threats of dissolution of the Union—the most determined opposition of the universal whig party—the people decided, so far as their votes decide any measure, THAT TEXAS SHOULD BE ANNEXED. The verdict has thus been, to all intents and purposes, rendered. Why, then, should not the decision of the nation be carried into effect?

Should this country wait until the argument from the opposition of Mexico to it is done away? This would be equivalent to defeating this measure. The American statesman who should admit the validity of this claim in an official document would deny the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence, decide against long established national laws, and bring upon him the indignation of the people. Now this claim of Mexico on an independent nation is precisely the same as the claim of Great Britain of perpetual allegiance on the part of its individual subjects.—Such a claim our Government never has sanctioned—never can sanction. And no one has scouted it more decidedly than Daniel Webster did when, as Secretary of State, he so appropriately rebuked the insolence of the Mexican Government in his reply to Bocanegra. He then declared:

"The Government of the United States does not maintain, and never has maintained, the doctrine of perpetuity of natural allegiance. And surely Mexico maintains no such doctrine; because her actual existing Government, like that of the United States, is founded on the principle that men may throw off the obligation of that allegiance to which they were born."

Yet Mexico boldly sets up this doctrine! Partisans here as boldly justify her!!—Their cry is, that Mexico must be appeased ere the United States can honestly acquire Texas! If this argument is a good one, to delay is to indefinitely postpone. It matters not whether the United States wait one year or fifty. Mexico's consent can never be obtained—Texas, consequently, can never be annexed.

Should the government wait until opposition to it at home ceases? This, too, will never cease. The same elements that resisted the Louisiana purchase are at work now. The same means then used are to be used now. The same slavery argument then used is used now. A New England confederacy was then projected to sever this country from the Union, if this glorious purchase was consummated: it is now proposed, by the same sort of politicians, to unite opposition to Texas in a similar New England convention, to meet in Faneuil Hall. And now, too, as it was then, the same democracy have taken this measure in their keeking, and will stand together, in one united phalanx, shoulder to shoulder, and with the same patriotic enthusiasm in New England as in Missouri and Michigan, to carry it out. Further, delay will not lessen future opposition, though it may serve the purpose of weakening, by dividing, those who are to defend it.

Should the objection of adding more slave territory be permitted to delay or to defeat the addition of a splendid domain of untold riches to this glorious Union?—On that point the question has not changed one jot *since the original purchase of Texas in* 1803. When Jefferson, J. Q. Adams—in a word, all statesmen of all parties—claimed this territory to be ours as much as New Orleans was, it was known that a part of it must temporarily be slave territory. When from 1825 to 1832 statesmen of all parties again made every effort to purchase it of Mexico, this fact was just as well known. If it was expedient to add its wealth to our wealth *then*, it is expedient now. Delay will serve no other purpose than to allow the embers of discord to be fanned. Statistics show to a demonstration that slavery is travelling south with FREE LABOR (to be its ultimate extinguisher) at its heels. It takes this course of necessity. Will delay, then, make the slave territory any less?

Admitting, as the candid must admit, that the American people have decided in favor of the admission of Texas, and that consequently *Texas must be annexed to these United States*, and what sound argument is there for *delay* that will not amount to an argument for *ultimate defeat* of this measure? Let its friends then beware of such arguments. If ever the saying was true that "delay is dangerous," it is so in this case. While the politicians of this country are quarrelling, the statesmen of other countries are acting. Annexation six months ago would have been easier than it will be now, or than it will be six months hence. It is [time then, high time, our government acted. If it means to defeat the designs of the enemies of annexation—at home and abroad —there is no other course but that of IMMEDIATE ANNEXATION. The people are ripe for it. The Democracy will defend it. The best interests of our marine, our manufacturing, our agricultural community demand it. And not ten years will elapse ere even the candid among the opposition will be led to wonder how they could have been led by designing demagogues to carry on so bitter a warfare against it.—[*Boston Post.*

From the Harrisburg Argus.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—UNION WITH MEXICO—ANNEXATION OF TEXAS—MR. BENTON.—We publish to-day the Message of the President upon the subject of our Mexican difficulties. Its perusal will, we doubt not, afford universal satisfaction.—Whatever partisan presses may say in reference to President Tyler, there will remain no doubt among the people themselves of the necessity in this emergency of giving the confidence and support of every branch of the Government to the Executive. It is not John Tyler, nor the President of the United States, who is to be thought of. It is the nation itself—its union and prosperity, and the extension of its dominions, that demands our attention.

The necessity of Texas annexation, or at least the expediency of it, is recognised by three-fourths of the Union—and the very men in the Senate who lead the opposition, represent constituencies almost unanimously in favor of the measure. Look at Mr. Benton, representing a State whose Legislature has instructed him to support the measure, evading the spirit of his instructions, by submitting a bill, well calculated to defeat, but never to carry out the measure. Mr. Benton's only study appears to be to violate his instructions, with an appearance of obedience to them.

Striking out the sixth section, this would be a tolerable arrangement, but who is so blind as not to see that this section is introduced for the very purpose of procrastinating? When will Mexico consent?—never, until compelled by force of arms. And why, pray, should we solicit the acquiescence of Mexico when we treat with Texas? Did we esteem it necessary to consult the wishes of Spain when we made the treaty with Mexico which we are now warned so loudly against violating?

We are sorry to see a man in Mr. Benton's position pandering to the idle rhodomontade in relation to the slave question. We do not care a fig whether slavery is abolished or retained in Texas, but we regret exceedingly that a color should be given in the Senate of the United States to the charges of sectional dissentions made against us by the Mexican Government. Truly American, is the following passage in Mr. Tyler's message upon this subject, and we would wish that all our public men would bear it in mind:

"Mexico has still to learn, that however freely we may indulge in discussion among ourselves, the American people will tolerate no interference in their domestic affairs by any foreign government, and in all that concerns the constitutional guarantees and the national honor, the people of the United States have but one mind and one heart."

We go for immediate annexation—the people have willed it—let not their servants disobey.

HOW LARGE IS TEXAS?—A Texas paper answers the interrogatory thus:—It contains 318,000 square miles; and is full as large as the following States united:

	Sq. Miles.	Population.
Louisiana,	48,000	352,411
Mississippi,	48,000	375,651
Alabama,	50,000	590,707
Georgia,	62,000	691,392
South Carolina,	33,000	614,290
Virginia,	67,000	1,239,797
	308,000	3,844,303

[Civilian.

LITIGATION IN HINDS COUNTY.—In Hinds county the whole population in 1840, was 18,778. The number of judgments obtained in the Circuit Court of Hinds since 1st of January, 1833, to 1st January, 1845, was 13,231; the number of suits brought during the same period, was 16,064: the amount of money collected by the sheriffs (by computation) $2,142,240; and the amount returned by the sheriffs nulla bona (as property) $1,030,000. We are indebted for these facts to our worthy district clerk, R. N. Downing. [Reformer.